

IN THE CLAIMS:

A complete listing of the pending claims of this application, including any amendments made by this paper, follows below:

1. (Currently Amended) A notebook comprising:

a ~~plurality of sheets~~ stack of a plurality of sheets of paper bound together, said stack having an outer perimeter thereof, each paper of said plurality of sheets said stack further having a generally elongate opening located therein and formed through a thickness thereof, each said opening being aligned with an opening of any adjacent sheets of paper and being sized and shaped to receive a writing instrument therethrough and being generally spaced away from said outer perimeter;

a cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said cover being movable to a closed position wherein said cover is generally parallel to and faces a top sheet of said ~~plurality~~ stack of sheets of paper, said cover having at least one of a thickness or stiffness that is greater than each sheet of said plurality of sheets of paper; and

a retaining mechanism to retain said cover in said closed position such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said opening is generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said opening therein.

2. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover lacks any opening that is of the same size and shape of said opening of said ~~sheets of paper~~ stack that is aligned with said opening of ~~each sheet of paper~~ said stack.

3. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein each of said plurality of sheets of paper and said cover are generally aligned.

4. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein each of said plurality of sheets of paper includes a plurality of lines printed thereon.

5. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 further including a binding mechanism binding said sheets of paper and said cover together.

6. (Original) The notebook of claim 5 wherein said binding mechanism is a spiral binder.

7. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 5 wherein said generally elongate ~~openings are~~ opening is located generally adjacent to said binding mechanism.

8. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover is pivotally bound to said plurality of sheets of paper such that said cover is movable to an open position in which the cover is generally not parallel with said plurality of sheets of paper.

9. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover lacks any ~~openings~~ opening of equal or greater size than said generally elongate ~~openings~~ opening of said ~~plurality of sheets of paper~~ stack.

10. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein each of said sheets and said cover include a plurality of binding holes located adjacent to an inner edge thereof.

11. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said notebook further includes a supplemental cover pivotally coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, wherein said retaining mechanism includes a flap coupled to said supplemental cover which can be removably coupled to said cover to retain said cover in said closed position.

12. (Original) The notebook of claim 11 wherein said one of said cover or said supplemental cover includes a male snap portion and the other ones of said cover or said supplemental cover includes a female snap portion, wherein said male snap portion and said female snap portion can cooperate to maintain said cover in said closed position.

13. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 1 wherein ~~each~~ said opening includes an enlarged portion.

14. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 13 wherein said enlarged portion is generally centrally located along a length of ~~each~~ said opening.

15. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 13 wherein said enlarged portion extends at least partially in a direction generally perpendicular to a length of ~~each~~ said opening.

16. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 1 wherein ~~each~~ said opening is at least about six inches in length.

17. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 1 wherein ~~each~~ said opening includes a length-to-width ratio of at least about 6:1.

18. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 1 further including a writing instrument located in said generally elongate ~~openings~~ opening.

19. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein each sheet includes a tear guide line extending generally parallel to an edge of each paper such that each sheet can be torn along its associated tear guideline and removed from said notebook.

20. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover covers at least about 50% of said ~~openings~~ opening of said ~~sheets of paper~~ stack.

21. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover is configured to retain a writing instrument located in said ~~openings~~ opening when a writing instruments is located in said ~~openings~~ opening and said cover is retained in said closed position by said retaining mechanism.

22. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover is configured to retain a writing instrument located in said ~~openings~~ opening when a writing instruments having a length of at least about 6 inches is located in said ~~openings~~ opening and said cover is retained in said closed position by said retaining mechanism.

23. (Currently Amended) The notebook of claim 1 wherein ~~each~~ said opening is sized to receive a writing instrument having a length of between about 4 inches and about 7 inches, and having a width of between about 1/8 inch and about 1 inch, and wherein said cover lacks any opening that would allow such a writing instrument to pass therethrough while said writing instrument remains generally parallel to said cover.

24. (Currently Amended) A notebook comprising:

a plurality of sheets of paper bound together, each paper of said plurality of sheets having an outer perimeter and a generally elongate opening located therein and entirely spaced away from said outer perimeter, each opening being aligned with an opening of any adjacent sheets of paper and being sized and shaped to receive a writing instrument therethrough;

a cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said cover being movable to a closed position wherein said cover is generally parallel and faces a top sheet of said plurality of sheets of paper, said cover lacking any opening that would allow a writing instrument to pass therethrough while said writing instrument remains generally parallel to said cover; and

a retaining mechanism to retain said cover in said closed position.

25. (Currently Amended) A notebook comprising:

a plurality of sheets of paper bound together, each paper of said plurality of sheets having an outer perimeter and a generally elongate opening located therein, each opening being generally spaced away from said perimeter and aligned with an opening of any adjacent sheets of paper and being sized and shaped to receive a writing instrument therethrough;

a cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said cover being movable to a closed position wherein said cover is generally parallel to and faces a top sheet of said plurality

of sheets of paper, wherein said cover lacks any opening that is of the same size and shape of said opening of said sheets of paper that is aligned with said opening of each sheet of paper; and
a retaining mechanism to retain said cover in said closed position such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said openings are generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said openings therein.

26. (Currently Amended) A notebook comprising:

a stack of a plurality of sheets of paper bound together, said stack each paper of said plurality of sheets having a generally elongate opening located therein and formed through a thickness thereof each opening being aligned with an opening of any adjacent sheets of paper and being sized and shaped to receive a writing instrument therethrough, said opening being generally spaced away from said outer perimeter;

a front cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said front cover having at least one of a thickness or stiffness that is greater than each sheet of said plurality of sheets of paper; and

a rear cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said rear cover having at least one of a thickness or stiffness that is greater than each sheet of said plurality of sheets of paper, said notebook being movable to a closed position wherein said front cover and said rear cover are generally parallel and said plurality of sheets of paper are located between said front and rear cover, and wherein said front and rear covers are releasably attachable together to retain said notebook in said closed position such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said opening is generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said opening therein.

27. (New) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover and opening are configured such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said opening is generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said opening therein such that said writing instrument cannot be removed from said opening in any direction thereof.

28. (New) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said opening is entirely spaced away from said outer perimeter.

29. (New) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said notebook is configured to retain a writing instrument having a length of at least about 4 inches and having a width of at least about 1/8 inch in said opening when said cover is retained in said closed position.

30. (New) The notebook of claim 29 further comprising said writing instrument.

31. (New) The notebook of claim 25 wherein said cover and openings are configured such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said openings are generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said openings therein such that said writing instrument cannot be removed from said openings in any direction thereof.

32. (New) The notebook of claim 25 wherein said openings are entirely spaced away from said outer perimeter.

33. (New) A notebook system comprising:

a writing instrument; and

a notebook including:

a stack of a plurality of sheets of paper bound together and having an outer perimeter thereof, said stack having a generally elongate opening located therein and formed through a thickness thereof, said opening being sized and shaped to receive said writing instrument therein;

a cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said cover being movable to a closed position wherein said cover is generally parallel to and faces a top sheet of said stack of sheets of paper; and

a retaining mechanism to retain said cover in said closed position such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said opening traps said writing instrument

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that is located in said opening therein such that said writing instrument cannot be removed from said opening.